

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

9x08 - "No Place Like Home."

Screenplay by Martyn Dunn

Based on the novella

"Paradigm"
by Heather Jarman

appearing in

Star Trek: Worlds of Deep Space Nine
Book 1 - Cardassia / Andor

TEASER

FADE IN:

1 EXT. DEEP SPACE NINE

The usual establishing shot, showing the *Defiant* sat on the station's docking ring. But after a few moments, we zoom in closer on the *Defiant*, until we see a space-suited figure walking with gravity boots over the ship's dorsal hull.

Zooming in closer still, we see that the figure is SHAR, and he is holding out a tricorder. After a few moments...

PRYNN (comm)
Ensign Tenmei to Ensign ch'Thane.

He starts a little at the summons, but decides to ignore it and carries on with his scans.

PRYNN (comm)
Shar, I know you can hear me.

He turns, and he sees another space-suited figure clomping towards him over the ship's hull. It is PRYNN TENMEI, and she is a bit annoyed at Shar. He knows full well why.

SHAR (comm)
Ensign. What are you doing here?

PRYNN (comm)
It seemed like a nice night for a walk outside.

SHAR (comm)
Ah. Sarcasm. Nog has been teaching me about that. Apparently, using such an inflection is a critical component of Ferengi interpersonal communication.

PRYNN (comm)
How clinical of you. Now what are you doing here? Did you decide to change our dinner date to an open-air picnic without telling me?

SHAR (comm)

I needed to inspect the *Defiant's* hull. I had detected pores in the ablative armour.

PRYNN (comm)

That can be dangerous. Is it safe for the *Defiant* to ship out?

SHAR (comm)

For now... and for about another six months.

PRYNN (comm)

Then I'm glad you took care of it tonight. It was clearly urgent.

SHAR (comm)

Nog does not need to teach you, I see.

PRYNN (comm)

Yes, I've mastered sarcasm. Now perhaps we can move onto something else, like pseudo-sincerity.

Accepting defeat, Shar pauses before admitting something.

SHAR (comm)

Zhavey contacted me tonight. She wants me to come home. It is time... for Thriss's Sending.

(explanation)

Her funeral.

PRYNN (comm)

(dismayed)

Oh... Shar, I didn't... why didn't you tell me?

SHAR (comm)

I could barely face it myself. But perhaps it would be better to talk about it. With someone I trust.

PRYNN (comm)
(flattered)
The shuttle bay's empty right now.

She holds out her suited hand, and he takes it.

2 **INT. DEFIANT - SHUTTLEBAY**

Shar has removed his environment suit, and is zipping up his regular uniform. Prynn is just shrugging out of hers. Just as the strap of her basic undershirt falls off her shoulder, Shar realises he is watching her. He turns away.

Prynn knows he saw her, and shyly pulls the strap back up. She puts her suit away in a locker, then joins Shar in slumping down to sit against a wall of the shuttle bay.

PRYNN
Shar, I'm not sure I understand.
Wouldn't Thriss's funeral have
been conducted months ago, as soon
as her body was returned to Andor?

SHAR
Not necessarily. The Sending is
delayed until all pieces of the
deceased's life can be gathered
together. Thriss's *shreya* was on a
deep-space research mission and
could not come home until now.

PRYNN
At least Vretha was good enough to
let you know when it was time.

SHAR
You misunderstand. *Zhavey's*
enemies in the Andorian government
are close to gathering enough
votes to challenge her appointment
as Federation councillor.

PRYNN
That's a shame. But what does it
have to do with you?

SHAR

They are using my refusal to come home for the *shelthreth* as proof of her failure, not only as a councillor but as a parent too.

PRYNN

But that's not fair.

SHAR

And then there is Thriss's *zhavey*. A thousand years ago, Sessethantis zh'Cheen would have been the First Princess in one of Andor's ruling families. We have not ruled by gentry for centuries, but many still respect the position of those families.

PRYNN

And let me guess - she's one of those same political enemies. So Vretha just wants you to help her save face in front of Thriss's influential family. But will there be time for you to help her if you're attending Thriss's funeral?

(no response)

Shar?

Shar's silence and palpable sadness help the penny to drop.

PRYNN

You're not invited. Are you?

Shar shakes his head silently. Prynn stands and steps away, suddenly furious. She paces, ranting loudly in her anger.

PRYNN

How dare they! You were closer to Thriss than anyone! Well, there's no way you should go. They can all go to hell! Vretha, Thriss's mom, your bondmates, they're all just punishing you for defying them. You don't owe them anything!

SHAR

The official request for my leave
has already come in from the
Federation Council. Captain Kira
has agreed. The decision is made.

Prynn is still furious at Vretha's heartless manipulations.
But seeing the devastated state Shar is in, she pulls
herself under control and crouches back down to him.

PRYNN

Well if you insist on going, then
you're not going alone. I've never
been to Andor, and I can't think
of a better time to visit.

Shar is touched, for once his emotions obvious. Surprise,
relief, and maybe something more? Prynn can only hope.

SHAR

(whisper)

Thank you. I cannot begin to...
thank you.

She stares into his haunted eyes, wanting desperately to
caress him, comfort him. She stops herself.

PRYNN

Of course. That's what...
friends... do for each other.

Prynn holds the eye contact. It feels as if something might
be about to happen. But before it does...

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. SPACE - ESTABLISHING

A massive blue-and-white gas giant planet, surrounded by glittering rings. In orbit of the gas giant is a large moon. This moon is Andor, the ice-capped homeworld of the Andorians (as seen in ENT 4x14 "The Aenar").

There is also a Federation STARBASE in orbit of the smaller planet, a spacedock of the type seen in the TOS movies. This is Andor's equivalent of Deep Space Nine - a military installation and focus of Starfleet activity in the system.

A Federation transport is just approaching the spacedock, whose large doors rumble open to receive it.

4 INT. STARBASE 7 - AIRLOCK CORRIDOR

The transport has now docked, and its passengers are disembarking. A row of people - Andorian civilians, humans and other races - wait patiently, carrying their travelling bags, to go through the arrival procedures.

In the queue is Lt Cmdr PHILLIPA MATTHIAS (8x18 "This Grey Spirit"). Behind her, Shar stands, not looking forward to his visit home. Behind him is Prynn, excited about the adventure but tempered by her feelings for Shar.

As they wait, Shar resigns himself to something. He reaches under his uniform shirt and pulls out a small pendant on a chain around his neck. He takes it off reverently, gazes at it a moment, numb. Then he draws Matthias' attention.

SHAR

Commander...

(she turns)

You should take this before we
part ways.

MATTHIAS

Ensign... I'm sorry. I didn't know
how to ask... but are you sure you
don't want to deliver it yourself?

SHAR

No. *Zha* Sessethantis will never receive it from me. You take it. You must honour your promise.

Matthias reluctantly takes the pendant and stores it in her bag. Prynn has observed the exchange and wondered what it means. They quietly move further along the queue, towards the Starfleet officers running the arrivals process.

5 INT. STARBASE 7 - COMMON AREA

Matthias, Shar and Prynn emerge from arrivals into the public area. This is the equivalent of DS9's Promenade, but of Starfleet design - wide walkways, bars and restaurants, shops, with civilians and Starfleet mingling.

SHAR

Prynn, if you could check the departure monitors to find out which transporter station we're queued to -

The moment they emerge, the group is ambushed by a cluster of local press REPORTERS. They shine lights on Shar, shove cameras in his face, and all begin asking questions at once. The group is caught completely off guard.

REPORTER 1

Sat Two newsnet, we're live from Starbase Seven with Starfleet Ensign Thirishar ch'Thane. Ensign ch'Thane, how is it to be home?

SHAR

What? It's fine. But I don't -

REPORTER 2

Is it true Councillor zh'Thane will invoke the Whole Vessel Law on your behalf?

SHAR

I'm not going to discuss -

REPORTER 3

Have you spoken with your mentors
at the Andorian Science Institute?
Do you have any comment on the
rumoured research underway there?

Looking around, Shar sees the alarmed and confused looks on
Prynn and Matthias' faces. The press have quickly separated
him from them. He tenses, ready to argue and fight.

SHAR

I don't know what you're -

OFFICER (o.s.)

That's enough!

One of the Starfleet OFFICERs, an Andorian *thaan*, wades
into the press corps and waves them off.

OFFICER

You people should know better.
This area is off-limits to non-
travellers. If you want to speak
to Ensign ch'Thane, you'll have to
make other arrangements. You have
thirty seconds to comply or face
charges.

Not waiting for a response, the officer grabs Shar by the
arms and begins to lead him away.

OFFICER

Ensign, you'd better come with me,
for your own safety...

As the officer drags him off, Shar looks back over his
shoulder, losing track of Prynn and Matthias in the crowd.
Prynn looks back at him, unable to reach him.

6 EXT. ANDOR CAPITAL CITY - ESTABLISHING

A modern and attractive city. Tall and shiny buildings,
open green spaces, snowy mountains in the background. But
the weather in the city is dull and overcast, with the
threat of rain in the air.

7 **INT. VRETHA'S OFFICE**

Charivretha zh'Thane's office on Andor - impressive and large, befitting her position as planetary representative.

VRETHA herself sits behind her desk, looking elegant and dignified, if harried. Vretha is watching the screen on her desk, which shows the video of the press's ambush of Shar. She shakes her head in annoyance and disappointment.

VRETHA

Idiots. Hand them a perfect story,
all gift-wrapped, and they ruin it
with their herd-animal mentality.

A signal comes through - a message she has been unhappily waiting for. She turns off the screen with a sigh, gathers herself for a moment, and gets up to leave.

8 **INT. STARBASE 7 - COMMON AREA**

Prynn sits alone at a table in the starbase's replimat. As station business goes on around her, she stares somewhat bemused at the object on the plate before her - a large beetle of some kind, the local version of a lobster. She prods at it with a utensil, trying from different angles.

Just as she is about to spear it right through the shell, Shar appears and joins her heavily at the table.

PRYNN

Shar! Are you okay? I was worried.

SHAR

I am fine. Where is Counsellor
Matthias?

PRYNN

Contacting some local colleagues
of hers. There's some kind of
project she wanted their help on
while she's here, apparently.

(awkward pause)

Shar... what was that thing you
gave to Matthias? If I can ask.

SHAR

It is a *shapla*. At the Time of Knowing, when we first meet our bondmates, each of us receives one. Four locks of hair, one from each of us, woven together to become whole and placed inside. I carried it with me always.

PRYNN

So why give it to Matthias?

SHAR

She has... an errand to run. As I said, all the pieces of Thriss's life must be together for the Sending. As her caretaker in her final weeks, *Zha Sessethantis* felt that Counsellor Matthias held a vital piece of Thriss's life. She has invited the counsellor to attend the Sending. She will take the *shapla*, and join its weaving with Thriss's own and those of Anichent and Dizhei, to send them with her to the next life.

PRYNN

(quietly appalled)

So you're sending your engagement gift back to the person who won't even let you come to the funeral?

SHAR

It's what's done, Prynn. Spiting the rights of the dead because I have arguments with the living will improve nothing. I was naive to think I could keep it.

PRYNN

Shar, I hope you don't hate me for saying this, but I don't think I like some of your people's traditions very much.

SHAR

Then you will like this even less.
It appears... we will be going to
Cheen-Thitar Keep after all.

PRYNN

What? What are you talking about?
You've just got done explaining
all the ways you're not welcome.

SHAR

Not at the Sending, no. But the
security officer told me that the
entire Zhevra region - the
capital, where my *zhavey* lives -
is blocked by storms. We will not
be able to transport through the
atmospheric interference.

PRYNN

(exasperated)

So what are we supposed to do?

SHAR

Counsellor Matthias will take a
shuttle to the Thelasa-vei region,
where Thriss's family lives. The
officer suggested we join her, and
then arrange ground transportation
to Zhevra from there.

PRYNN

You can't be serious.

SHAR

Prynn, there are certain rules of
hospitality in my culture, that
override personal considerations.
It would cause great offence if
zha Sessethantis were to learn of
these circumstances, and that I
could have turned to her for help,
and did not.

PRYNN

Even if they don't want you there?

SHAR

To deny her the opportunity to be generous would only make things worse. Insulting the *Zha* of the powerful clan of Cheen would affect *zhavey* and her political struggles. It would affect Dizhei and Anichent, who have been hurt enough. I'm tired of making choices that hurt people, Prynn.

Prynn sighs, seeing that this is not an easy decision for Shar to make. She relents.

PRYNN

Alright. You know this place, I don't. You're in charge.

SHAR

(re her plate)

Why did you buy a steamed *shaysa*?

PRYNN

Oh, this? It's not mine. Someone just left it here on the table.

She pushes the plate away, a little embarrassed, and gets up from the table with Shar.

9 INT. STARBASE 7 - SHIP HANGAR

The cavernous space inside the spacedock. A local transport ship is attached to the body of the spacedock by a boarding bridge, through which shapes walk onto the ship...

10 INT. ANDOR SHUTTLE - PASSENGER AREA

The shuttle is getting ready for launch, and the passengers are packed into rows of four seats. Windows nearby show the inside of the spacedock, with other ships berthed.

Shar and Prynn carry their travelling bags into the throng, looking around for Matthias. She WAVES to them, and they go over to find that she has reserved two seats next to her.

The fourth seat in their row is taken by a young Andorian female, THIA. She is cradling a bulge around her middle - a just-born baby is held close to her belly. The baby fusses slightly, and Thia soothes it with quiet whispers.

MATTHIAS

Thirishar ch'Thane, Prynn Tenmei,
this is Arenthialeh zh'Vazdi. Her
clan has a keep close to Cheen-
Thitar. She's a botanist returning
from a month of studies on Dramia.

Thia gives Shar only a brief flash of eye contact before returning her attention to her child.

THIA

I am honoured, *cha* Thirishar.

SHAR

I share the honour, *zha*
Arenthialeh. My familiar name is
Shar.

THIA

For a supposed renegade, you
appear to have been taught
correctly. You may call me Thia.

The comment leads to an awkward silence. Then an ALERT over the comms sounds, and disturbs the baby at Thia's belly. It writhes, kicking off its covers. We can see that the baby is held inside a pouch of blue flesh that wraps all around the mother's abdomen, like a marsupial's pouch.

Shar politely averts his eyes - it is improper. Thia massages the area above the pouch, which seems to calm the baby. Prynn attempts polite conversation to fill the quiet.

PRYNN

Is all well with your child?

THIA

We have been travelling for
several days. He has had to spend
most of the time in my pouch.

SHAR

Have you always lived in the
Thelasa-vei region, *zha*?

THIA

All my life. So I must wonder if
Shathrissia's Sending is the
reason for your visit.

(off Shar's
reaction)

I apologise if I cause you unease.

SHAR

How do you know of Shathrissia's
Sending?

THIA

Much of Andor knows your name,
Ensign. The rebellious *chei* of our
Federation representative. The
daring scientist who travelled the
galaxy and brought the Yrythny
eggs that have been the subject of
such controversy. Besides which,
the clans of Thelasa-vei have
always been tightly bound. My own
clan has farmed with the Cheens
for generations. There is little
that happens in their keep that we
are not aware of.

(beat)

You would understand that, if you
had not been raised in Zhevra as
your *zhavey* insisted.

SHAR

There is no shame in being raised
in Zhevra.

THIA

Except for a cosmopolitan culture
that encourages no more than a
surface commitment to raising
children in the ways that have
sustained our people.

SHAR

You generalise unfairly.

THIA

Do I? Look around you, Shar. Have you even wondered why so many are travelling to Andor at this time in the calendar? Have you become so removed from your people that you have forgotten the Spring Water Festival? Have you ever in your life joined with the *shen* in your bond to plead for the Water Guardian's protection?

Ashamed, Shar cannot answer.

THIA

I thought as much.

SHAR

We are not so slavishly modern in Zhevra that we have failed to honour the old traditions -

THIA

That is hardly what I'm saying -

SHAR

And perhaps if Thelasa-vei did not feel so threatened by social evolution -

The growing tension is pierced by small cries from Thia's child. Her attempts to soothe it again are too late - the baby launches into full-throated WAILS.

THIA

It is not reasonable to expect your journey to be disrupted by my *thei*. I will ask the steward if there is a quiet place to attend to my infant.

MATTHIAS

Let me help you.

Matthias gets up and helps Thia carry her bags. The pair of them clamber out of the seats into the aisle and head off, but not before Matthias gives Shar a cautious look.

The ship begins to rumble, and we see the backdrop of the spacedock pass as the shuttle begins to move. Prynn takes a deep breath, recovering from the palpable tension.

PRYNN

Is that what passes for
meaningless chitchat on Andor?

SHAR

'Chitchat,' as you call it, does
not exist on Andor.

PRYNN

So what do you do at parties?
(long pause)
You do believe in parties.

SHAR

No.

PRYNN

I get it. You're doing the Nog
thing again.

SHAR

Yes.

Out of the window, the edge of the spacedock goes past, and we are out into space. The icy orb of Andor can be seen in the distance, with the blue gas giant looming behind it. Prynn sighs - it might not be such an easy trip after all.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

11 EXT. THELASA-VEI MARKET - DAY

An open-air market, filled with stalls selling food and wares of all kinds, staffed by Andorian civilians. It is tourist season in Thelasa-vei, and the narrow streets are teeming with Andorians and other races browsing.

Among them are Shar and Prynn, strolling along. Prynn is wide-eyed with wonder, enjoying the sights. Shar is sombre, although still comforted to be among his own people.

PRYNN

So, what's this Water Festival all about, then?

SHAR

A part of our old traditions. The original idea was to pray to the Water Guardian to provide us with the water we need for our lives. Nowadays it is little more than an excuse to celebrate.

PRYNN

I grew up thinking Andor was an ice world, completely frozen. But it's been quite warm since we got here. Sweaty, almost.

SHAR

When Andorians first met humans, we were in the tail end of an ice age. With climate change and new technologies, we now live in much warmer temperatures. The result is a certain... meteorological unpredictability. This warm weather will not last for long.

PRYNN

I think I can handle whatever your world throws at me.

A moment of silence, as Shar lets her overconfidence pass.

PRYNN

And another thing. I grew up thinking your planet was called Andoria, but you always call it Andor. What's up with that?

SHAR

(shrug)

I grew up thinking your world was called Terra. Then I went to the Academy and everyone was calling it Earth. What is up with that?

PRYNN

Touché.

SHAR

(re the stalls)

Many of the items for sale here are one-of-a-kind. The people of this region value handicrafts - textiles especially. Sessethantis zh'Cheen herself is a renowned textile artist.

PRYNN

Seems like a replicator would simplify matters a lot.

SHAR

(shakes head)

Sessethantis always complained about how my bondmates and I never had to work for anything we had. She expected Thriss to learn to sew her own clothing, to cook with raw ingredients. All the things replicators have made obsolete. She perceives the process of doing the work as necessary to becoming a Whole individual.

PRYNN

I heard you use that word before.
"Whole." I thought it just meant
the Andorian people, *en masse*. But
the way you used it just now meant
something else, didn't it?

SHAR

Like many words, it has layers of
meaning. Referring to my people is
one of them. Telling another that
they are Whole in your thoughts is
an endearment of great intimacy.
It can also describe the sexual
union of the *shelthreth*, in which
new life is conceived.

PRYNN

(gently)
And just now?

SHAR

(hesitant)
Our ancient mythologies say that
we came into being when Uzaveh the
Infinite split the first Andorian
into four separate people.

PRYNN

The four sexes.

SHAR

Exactly. And that until the four
sexes come together again, as they
do in the *shelthreth*, they can
never be... Whole.

PRYNN

What about the Whole Vessel Law?
One of the press guys mentioned it
up on the starbase.

SHAR

It allows bondmates to separate
legally. Charivretha has promised
to invoke it on my behalf.

PRYNN

A divorce? Is that allowed?

SHAR

(quibble)

Sometimes, a bond will dissolve in later years. It is not necessarily official, more that they simply drift apart. They would still gather for clan events, but they are not required to live together full time.

PRYNN

Can they have relationships with other people?

SHAR

As long as the obligation to create and raise children has been met. My *zhavey* still maintains a relationship with my *thavan*, but my *shreya* and *charan* mostly live their own lives now I am grown.

PRYNN

So for a bond to dissolve before there's been a child...

SHAR

...Is extremely rare, and only permitted in exceptional circumstances.

PRYNN

And yet your mother is arranging this for you?

SHAR

In return for my standing with her in her political problems. Then she will remove herself from any and all positions in which she can influence my career. I will be left alone to do as I wish.

PRYNN

No strings attached?

SHAR

That's what she promised.

PRYNN

Do you believe her?

He pauses among the stalls, considering the question.

SHAR

I want to. But I'm not certain that I need what she has promised. My life on Deep Space Nine is comfortable. I can meet my career goals. I know that Captain Kira respects me for myself, not as an ancillary to my *zhavey*. I have...

(looks directly
at Prynn)

...friends. Friends who mean a great deal to me.

It looks like it might be about to turn into another moment between them. But Shar pulls back from it, and turns to look out across the stalls.

Prynn looks, and sees Matthias at one of the stalls. She is dealing with the vendor, who gives Matthias a small package in exchange for local currency. The deal seems slightly shady, as if the vendor does not want to be caught.

Pocketing the package, Matthias turns and spots Shar and Prynn. She walks over to them, still a little awkward and uneasy after the transaction.

MATTHIAS

You find us a way to Cheen-Thitar Keep, Shar?

SHAR

There's a vehicular leasing facility not far from here. They have reserved an aircar for us.

PRYNN

What did you buy? Something fun
for the kids?

MATTHIAS

Not... exactly.

She turns and begins to lead them on through the market,
dodging between other tourists. But she can see Prynn's
confused, questioning expression.

MATTHIAS

(quiet, private)

I... transacted for multiple
smears of *saf*.

PRYNN

(shocked)

Um... isn't that...

MATTHIAS

Illegal? Yes. Which is why trying
to get hold of it is difficult.
Before he left the station for his
vacation, Doctor Bashir and I
discussed collaborating on an
analysis of the drug to see if
there are any psychoactive
benefits. We obtained a special
authorisation from Starfleet
Medical to acquire a sample of *saf*
and transport it back to DS-Nine.

PRYNN

But Andorian security -

MATTHIAS

Saf originated on Andor, Prynn.
It's the only place where it's
legal, because it's been part of
the culture here for so long.
Andorians have used it in their
celebrations and traditions for -
(realises)

I'm sorry, Shar. I can discuss
this later. Or desist altogether.

SHAR

(awkward, flushing)

Unnecessary, Counsellor. The role of *saf* on my world is a fact of our existence.

PRYNN

How come it's illegal, then?

MATTHIAS

For non-Andorians, it's extremely addictive, physiologically and psychologically. We saw an outbreak of *saf* use during the war.

SHAR

I had not heard that.

MATTHIAS

One of our dirty little secrets. It can also be fatal. The overdose threshold is alarmingly low. Fortunately, *saf* is also one of those odd little organic molecules that doesn't replicate well, and the plant it's derived from can only be grown on Andor.

PRYNN

But what does it do to make people want to take the risk?

MATTHIAS

Among other things, *saf* is a powerful aphrodisiac that provides a myriad benefits to all aspects of sexual function...

PRYNN

Oh... I see.

Shar is walking a few steps ahead as they make their way through the market now, clearly uncomfortable with the topic. Prynn gazes after him - the subject of sex has made her think of him again, and her emerging feelings for him.

MATTHIAS
Prynn? Are you alright?

PRYNN
(caught)
Oh... yes, I'm fine. Just a little
overheated. You haven't got a fan,
have you?

MATTHIAS
No, sorry.

Matthias's smirk makes it clear she doesn't believe Prynn's cover story for a second. They continue to follow Shar through the crowd.

12 **INT. ANDORIAN PERSONAL AIRCAR**

The interior of a small personal transport, no bigger than a standard car. Prynn is sitting in the driver's seat, with Shar beside her and Matthias behind, only just settling in.

SHAR
We are cleared for departure.
(to Prynn)
I see that you are familiarising
yourself with -

PRYNN
Buckle up!

She SLAMS the car into action at top speed.

13 **EXT. ANDOR SURFACE**

The small aircar surges up at top speed, away from the ground and over the trees and buildings.

14 **INT. ANDORIAN PERSONAL AIRCAR**

Shar and Matthias are thrown back into their seats by the sudden JOLT of speed. Prynn grips the controls tight and WHOOPS with delight as the landscape rushes past the windscreen. She turns and flashes a wink at Shar.

Meanwhile, Matthias struggles to right herself.

MATTHIAS

I'd appreciate it if you'd warn me
the next time you plan to do that.

PRYNN

(faux innocent)
Sorry. Just thought we should have
some fun.

She looks again at Shar, and he is looking back at her.
Exhilarated out of his funk, Shar bursts into laughter.
Prynn grins, thrilled to see it, and laughs with him.

15 EXT. CHEEN-THITAR KEEP - EVENING

A high, rocky hilltop, far outside the city, as dusk turns
to night. Looming in the darkness is the KEEP - imagine an
imposing Scottish castle on the hill's crown, ancient grey
stone and ominous gargoyles.

The entire scene is lashed by a powerful and biting wind
that angrily flutters the keep's flags and threatens the
glowing torches.

The aircar heads towards the keep, struggling against the
wind. It eventually settles to the ground nearby, and the
doors open. Shar, Prynn and Matthias emerge, huddling
against the howling wind.

PRYNN

(shouting to
be heard)
Man! You weren't kidding about the
weather, were you?

She stands and gazes over to the keep, which stands dark
and forbidding. No-one is coming to greet them.

PRYNN

Now what?

In answer, Shar begins to walk towards the keep, and Prynn
and Matthias follow, shivering against the cold.

PRYNN

It's not too late to change your mind, if you want, Shar.

SHAR

No, Prynn. This is the one place in the Federation where I am most obligated to be... and the place where I am least welcome.

16 **INT. KEEP - RECEPTION AREA**

A low-ceilinged entry room, made of stone and wrought iron. Flaming braziers decorate the walls. Shar, Prynn and Matthias enter from under a stone archway, hugging themselves and rubbing their hands against the cold.

Once they are inside, Prynn GASPS...

17 **ANGLE**

...As she sees four Andorian soldiers standing at attention and blocking their way. They are dressed in some kind of classical old-fashioned armour - breastplates and cuirasses and helmets that leave their antennae standing tense.

They are also all pointing nasty-looking daggers directly at Shar. Prynn raises her hands instinctively in shock.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

18 INT. KEEP - RECEPTION AREA

As the Andorian soldiers point their daggers at Shar. Prynn is worried, but Shar calmly addresses the soldiers.

SHAR

I come in need, seeking the
hospitality of the *Zha* of the clan
of Cheen.

The four soldiers sheath their daggers in their armour and remove their helmets. They are every inch the perfect soldiers - close-cut hair and solid posture, contrasting with Shar's windswept appearance and flowing dreadlocks.

One of them - CH'SHAL, a male - steps forward and raises a flattened palm towards Shar. Shar mirrors the gesture.

CH'SHAL

We have not seen you for many
cycles, Thirishar ch'Thane. We bid
you welcome to the Keep.

SHAR

Your welcome is received gladly,
Vanazhad ch'Shal.

CH'SHAL

The *Zha* awaits you in the Enclave
chamber. We will escort you there.

SHAR

She knows I'm here?

CH'SHAL

She has known for some time.
Another visitor to the Keep
informed her of your arrival
- *Zha* Arenthialeh zh'Vazdi.

Two of the soldiers turn and head through another archway. Shar walks after them, followed by Prynn and Matthias.

19 INT. KEEP - CORRIDORS

The procession walks through a seeming maze of stone passages. They pass numerous other archways that lead to other passages - it seems like the keep goes on forever. There are no doors in these archways - everything is open.

20 INT. KEEP - DRESSING AREA

The group enters another room, draped with tapestries with benches around the walls. Ch'Shal stops and turns.

CH'SHAL

Ready yourselves for Enclave.
We'll take you inside after you've
changed.

Prynn passes a confused look at Shar, who is already shrugging off his jacket.

SHAR

You'll need to remove your
clothing. It's the custom.

PRYNN

So... when you say "remove your
clothing"...

SHAR

A ceara is provided for those who
sit in Enclave with the clan.

He indicates a piece of cloth on the bench, which Prynn picks up. It is little more than a sheer piece of pastel fabric, with a hole for the head. Prynn is unconvinced.

CH'SHAL

If you were carrying a weapon or
smuggling contraband, you would
not be able to hide it in the
presence of the Enclave.

PRYNN

I see.

Shar continues to get undressed right there. Ch'Shal makes no move to turn around. Prynn shares a look with Matthias.

PRYNN

(*sotto*)

No nudity taboo. Wonderful.

MATTHIAS

(*sotto*)

It's part of the Andorian psyche. Everything that's within the body is guarded closely - feelings, history. Anything that's on the outside... is public access.

Grimacing, Prynn reluctantly begins to disrobe as well.

Glancing around, she sees that Shar is almost naked already. She catches herself looking, but decides it's okay to look, just this once. She admires the slim lines of his body, but then he looks up, and Prynn jerks her eyes away.

SHAR

Wait. *Cha* Vanazhad, as a courtesy to my companions, who have different customs, would you absent yourselves while we change, and trust us to find our own way to the Enclave?

CH'SHAL

My apologies to your companions. Of course, Shar. We'll announce your arrival to the *Zha*.

Ch'Shal and the other soldier leave through another arch. Prynn smiles gratefully at Shar, and she and Matthias begin to get undressed. But Matthias reaches into her pocket...

MATTHIAS

Shar, before we see *zha*
Sessethantis...

She gently places his *shapla* back into his hand. He takes it and gazes at it, a churn of emotions.

MATTHIAS

You'll know what to do with it.

SHAR

(quietly)

Thank you.

21 INT. KEEP - ENCLAVE CHAMBER

An octagonal stone chamber in the depths of the castle. In the centre is a sunken pool of warm water, and the dim room wafts with clouds of steam. This is where the clan elders meet to discuss business.

Shar, Prynn and Matthias descend a flight of stone steps and enter through an archway, all naked except for their cearas tied neatly at the waist. The others stop talking and turn to look at them as they enter.

The atmosphere is one of curiosity with a touch of distrust and disapproval. Shar gazes between the faces around the pool, and realises that ANICHENT and DIZHEI are among them. They alone cannot quite bear to look Shar in the eye.

Shar's eyes move on past them to the head of the pool, and to Sessethantis zh'Cheen (THANTIS for short). Physically she is slight and willowy, like her daughter, but possessed of the same haughty dignity as Shar's own mother.

Holding Thantis's gaze, Shar steps quietly to a space along the edge of the pool, and slowly lowers himself into the water. Following his lead, Prynn and Matthias sit on either side of him. Prynn is openly protective of Shar, and Thantis can't help but notice. Once they are settled...

THANTIS

Welcome, clan and friends, to the Enclave before Deepening. We gather to join in the eternal quest to become Whole.

(turns to Matthias)

Welcome to Lieutenant Commander Phillipa Matthias of Alpha Centauri, who has come at my bidding to take part in the Rite of Memory. Accompanying her is

Ensign Prynn Tenmei of Earth. May
you find welcome in our Keep.

The gathered Andorians whisper a gentle "welcome." After an awkward pause, Thantis finally turns back to Shar.

THANTIS

And another comes with our
Starfleet guests. Thirishar, long-
lost *chei* not of my body, but of
my heart. Beloved of my...

Thantis stops and swallows, hangs her head, momentarily unable to continue. This is definitely not easy for her.

THANTIS

Shathrissia. There. I have invoked
the name of the dead. Thirishar
was her true *ch'te*. He has long
been away from us, walking a path
apart. But he has returned to join
us in our hour of grief. On behalf
of the Cheen-Thitar clans, I bid
you return to the Whole.

She holds Shar's eyes for another moment, then turns back to the other collected Andorians and dismisses them.

THANTIS

Be about your business.

The company relaxes, quietly relieved that the expected explosion never happened. But it is clear there is still going to be a battle of wills between Shar and Thantis.

22 **INT. KEEP - DINING CHAMBER**

Some hours later, Prynn pokes her head through another archway and into the keep's dining area. A larger room, again octagonal, it is filled with dining circles laid out like the one in Shar's quarters in 8x14 "Twilight."

Nervously, Prynn steps further into the room, craning her neck to find Shar and Matthias. She is wearing a new, dry *ceara*, but now with added pants and slippers of the same material. Everyone else is dressed likewise.

She steps between the circles, and sees how the Andorians sit on the ground around each dining mat, ladling food out of bowls in the centre of the mat into their own bowls around the edge. It is a remarkably informal and communal activity - everyone pitches in equally with no ceremony.

Finally, Prynn spots Thantis helping to add more food to the pile, and then sees Matthias in the same circle. She heads over to them, sitting cross-legged in the circle. Shar is there, as are Anichent and Dizhei, all eating with their heads down to avoid trouble.

PRYNN

Sorry I'm late. I guess somebody misplaced my clothes. I appreciate the loan of a *ceara, zha*.

THANTIS

No, I apologise, Ensign. The gate keepers were careless. I hope the garment suits you. I know our traditional clothing can seem... quaint to some.

A subtle backwards jab, which Prynn absorbs politely.

PRYNN

In fact, I'm quite taken with it. I'd like to take a *ceara* back home with me, if it can be arranged.

THANTIS

I will send several, Ensign, as a gift from my clan.

Thantis takes her own place in the circle, and they all dive in, enjoying their food. The over-dinner conversation remains entirely polite and innocuous on the surface, but the dark, accusatory subtext is clear to everyone there.

THANTIS

Weather controls will make it possible to leave Thelasa-vei by tomorrow Deepening.

SHAR

My *zhavey* awaits me.

THANTIS

I will alert the shuttle port that you will need passage. Oh, but wait... you will not be travelling alone, will you? You and your... friend... will travel to the capital together.

SHAR

As you say, *zha*.

THANTIS

Commander Matthias will join you after she has finished here. Will you three meet up at the starbase, or perhaps in Zhevra?

MATTHIAS

(butting in)

I'd like to become better acquainted with this area before I leave, *zha*. Perhaps you will have time to show me around your home, review some of the clan history?

THANTIS

Indeed. We are finished here, and I have obligations later. The local chapter of the Visionist party meets tonight in the Keep.

Shar tenses - the Visionists are Vretha's political rivals. Thantis tidies her bowls and gets up.

THANTIS (cont)

Now would be a good time if you'd like, Commander. Oh, and Shar... I believe you have something that belongs to me.

Prynn looks, and sees that Shar is wearing his *shapla* necklace, its shape clear under his *ceara*. Thantis leans over, right into Shar's personal space, and plucks the

shapla out, pulling it tight on its chain. Nobody moves, all waiting to see what will happen next.

THANTIS

(calm, cold)

There obviously must have been some misunderstanding, because Commander Matthias was going to deliver this to me.

SHAR

(equally calm)

Custom dictates that the bondmates return their weavings to the dead. Before I leave, Thriss will be completed by me. I owe it to her.

Shar plucks the *shapla* back out of Thantis's hand, places it safely back under his *ceara*, and returns to his meal.

MATTHIAS

(delicate)

I apologise, *zha*. When his journey here became necessary, I assumed he ought to present the weaving himself.

THANTIS

(straightening)

No matter. You do not know our ways. You cannot be expected to understand. We will leave now.

Thantis sweeps away from the circle and out of the room, and Matthias gets up to follow, again with a nervous, uncertain look back at Shar. Shar now has a defiant air about him. Anichent and Dizhei have said nothing, only hanging their heads and staying out of the way.

Prynn catches her breath from the tension. Having finished her meal, she tries one more time to initiate small talk.

PRYNN

Well, I'm stuffed. I think I might turn in. Unless there's anything else going on...

ANDORIAN 1

Dancing. There's always dancing
after Deepening meal.

ANDORIAN 2

The kitchen will bring out sweets.
The Spring Water Festival begins
tonight. Many delights have been
prepared to celebrate the season.

PRYNN

Well, dancing and dessert does
sound wonderful, but I'm
exhausted. I'm going to find the
sleeping rooms. After all, I don't
have your steely Andorian
constitution. I do need more than
four hours of sleep a night.

(standing)

Who should I thank for this
delicious meal?

They look at her, confused. They obviously don't do that.

PRYNN

Never mind, I'll figure it out.

With a gentle glance at Shar, whose head remains down as he
eats, Prynn steps out of the circle and leaves. Heading
back to the exit, her emotions are really starting to whirl
- affection, defensiveness and pity for Shar, annoyance at
the others for not backing him up, and fury for Thantis.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

23 EXT. CHEEN-THITAR KEEP - NIGHT

Deep night now, the looming castle still whipped by strong, unforgiving winds.

24 INT. KEEP - THANTIS' WORKSHOP

The room is strewn with weavings and textile paraphernalia - looms, framed tapestries and other half-finished works. Counsellor Matthias is looking with interest around the room, while Thantis indulges her. Matthias points to a series of painted clay masks hanging on the wall.

MATTHIAS

May I ask, what are those for?

THANTIS

They are grief masks. You'll need one for the Sending. I'll have it brought to you tomorrow. Then you can apply your own glazes and send it to the kiln.

(awkward pause)

Ensign Tenmei seems a nice enough youth. Very spirited. Tell me...

(faux casual)

Are she and Shar lovers?

MATTHIAS

(delicate)

I don't see how that's relevant to the current situation.

THANTIS

Whether they are romantically involved or not matters little to me. My *zhei* is gone. Her bond is not threatened. Speak freely.

But Thantis's tense body language suggests she cares very much. Matthias decides to confront it firm and head on.

MATTHIAS

I tell you this not because I believe it's your right to know, but so that the insinuations can stop. Shar and Prynn became friends on the Gamma mission, during which Prynn lost her mother and Shar lost Thriss. Their friendship helped them both through a difficult time.

25 INT. KEEP - DINING CHAMBER

The meal continues, now on the dessert courses. Anichent, Shar and Dizhei are all still there, having gone the entire meal without being able to look each other in the eye.

MATTHIAS (v.o.)

When Shar decided to let Dizhei and Anichent seek a replacement for him in the bond, he was especially lonely. Prynn became a natural companion for him.

26 INT. KEEP - CORRIDORS

Prynn walks alone through the maze of corridors, just wandering. She passes numerous archways to other corridors and areas of the Keep. Random Andorian extras pass her in the corridors and nod polite hellos.

MATTHIAS (v.o.)

Their relationship has progressed since then. I believe becoming more than friends would be good for both of them.

27 INT. KEEP - THANTIS' WORKSHOP

Thantis seems to soften slightly at Matthias's account.

THANTIS

Please believe me, Counsellor. I do not wish ill for Thirishar. My *zhei* loved him with her whole soul. She would want him to be

happy. But for him to flaunt his relationship with Ensign Tenmei at Thriss's own Sending is worse than inappropriate.

MATTHIAS

(disappointed)

I know.

THANTIS

But let us put aside Thirishar. Tell me about my *zhei*.

MATTHIAS

(heartfelt)

You have to know that I did everything I could. She had such promise! And she had been doing remarkably well - volunteering in the station's infirmary, renewing her applications for medical school. She had such a life force within her... I don't understand where I went wrong.

THANTIS

You have to know, Counsellor, that I read your report so many times that I had it memorised. I hung on each word, hoping that I'd find the answer to my question - where did I go wrong as her *zhavey*?

(difficult pause)

Please tell me... how alone was she when she died?

MATTHIAS

Anichent and Dizhei were -

THANTIS

(touches chest)

No. In here. Within herself. Had all her connections to the Whole been severed?

Matthias begins to tear up, sorry to have to deliver sad news, but determined to tell the truth.

MATTHIAS

I wish I could tell you that her
last hours were spent being
nurtured by those who loved her.
But I can't.

28 **INT. KEEP - CORRIDORS**

Prynn pauses at a crossroads in the stone passages. She has no idea which way to go, so she chooses one at random, and walks on. What she finds is another chamber with a DOOR - that alone is unusual. Her curiosity piqued, she gently pushes open the door and steps inside.

29 **INT. KEEP - COFFIN ROOM**

Prynn knows instantly that she should not be here, but her feet keep her moving closer to the COFFIN even so. It is made of white marble, but with a clear lid. As Prynn steps up close to it, she looks down and sees THRISS in repose, swathed in the gentle blue light of a stasis field.

MATTHIAS (v.o.)

I believe that being disconnected
from the Whole is what led Thriss
to take her own life.

Prynn studies Thriss's soft, delicate face. She reaches out and gently brushes the coffin lid, as if to brush away a lock of hair. She feels no jealousy, only sorrow for Shar.

THANTIS (v.o.)

Perhaps it was the Whole that
smothered her.

Prynn turns and leaves, her emotions in a whirl again.

30 **INT. KEEP - CORRIDORS**

Reaching the crossroads of corridors again, Prynn pauses, not knowing which way to go. She is about to head down one passage when she hears a voice.

THIA (o.s.)

Unless you've just pulled your weaving off the loom and are ready to dye it, I'd advise you not to go down there.

Prynn turns to see Thia, dressed in an embroidered ceara with temporary tattoos on her skin. Her hair is pulled up in an elaborate design and her ears are decorated with numerous earrings. It is clearly a party outfit. Feeling guilty for intruding, Prynn is glad of the distraction.

PRYNN

Thia! Hi. I wondered if we'd see you here. But we didn't run into you at the Enclave or at the meal.

THIA

I was taking my turn in the keep crèche, where our very young are cared for. I heard about the travel difficulties created by the storm. Shar did the proper and sensible thing, bringing you here.

PRYNN

I was afraid it'd be inappropriate under the circumstances.

THIA

True, the rites of the Sending must be observed, but so too must the rites of the Spring Water Festival, including the welcoming of visitors such as you and me. The timing is unfortunate, but not unprecedented. All is well in that regard.

An awkward pause as Prynn tries to think of something else to say. They are at least willing to be polite and civil.

PRYNN

You want to keep me company while I get lost? I have absolutely no idea where I'm supposed to sleep.

THIA

(indicating outfit)

Wouldn't you rather dress for the festival dances? I have many jewels you could borrow, and I could paint your face and body.

PRYNN

(thinks a moment)

I'm tempted, but I really need to sleep. If I don't get at least six hours a night followed by a strong *raktajino*, I'm barely fit to be considered sentient.

THIA

If you insist. I will escort you to your sleep hall.

Prynn smiles gratefully, accepting.

31 **INT. KEEP - DINING CHAMBER**

The meal is over, clean-up is proceeding, and events are moving towards the dancing portion of the evening. As the dining circle breaks up, there is finally no avoiding it. They all speak hesitantly, unsure of their feelings, but wanting under it all to be there for each other.

ANICHENT

Thirishar...

SHAR

Th'se...

DIZHEI

You look well.

SHAR

As do you, *sh'za*.

ANICHENT

Will you come with us? To the arboretum? We should talk.

Hope fighting to emerge, Shar stands and offers his arm to Dizhei. She hesitates to take it, but eventually does. Shar takes Anichent's hand, and the three leave the dining room.

32 **INT. KEEP - SLEEPING HALL**

Another large communal area, laid out with sleeping mats. Sheer screens provide only partial privacy. Only a couple of the mats are occupied with Andorians under thin sheets. Prynn and Thia enter the room, and Prynn is a little exasperated and disappointed to see the arrangements.

PRYNN

Doesn't it bother you to never get your own personal space? Don't you ever just want to be by yourself?

THIA

(shrug)

If a group is newly bonded and undertaking the *shelthreth*, or if a *zhavey* has recently given birth, there are isolated places that provide greater privacy. But we have always lived by sharing whatever resources we have. Sleep is merely a biological need.

Prynn sees with relief that her travelling bag has been deposited by the side of one of the mats. She gratefully goes to it and opens it, checking everything is in place.

PRYNN

This may sound like an odd question, but what about your possessions? Personal belongings?

THIA

Each family unit has rooms in the keep. Family issues can be dealt with in those spaces, belongings stored, and so forth. But for the most part, the need to possess something exclusively doesn't figure into the Andorian way.

PRYNN
(understanding)
You're all in this together.

THIA
We're supposed to be. And lest you think we're entirely backward, you should know that temperature regulators have been woven into the fabric. You will stay warm.

PRYNN
Am I that transparent?

THIA
(smile)
Your skin is... bumpy. And you are rather bluish for a species that is ordinarily not.

PRYNN
Thank you, Thia. Well, I think I'll settle down. Where will you be sleeping?

THIA
Close by. My *sh'za* has the children tonight. I will take my rest after dancing.

Nodding politely, Thia turns and leaves the room. Prynn gets under the covers and attempts to settle down to sleep.

33 INT. KEEP - ARBORETUM

Another room in the depths of the castle, this one filled with trees and plants - an oasis of nature in the stark stone of the keep. Shar runs his hand delicately along the trunk of a tree while Anichent and Dizhei stand stiffly nearby, unsure how to begin.

SHAR
I recall our visits here with Thriss. Is that why you chose it, Anichent?

ANICHENT

In part. We shared happy memories here. I hoped they'd return - that past joys might ease our present grief.

DIZHEI

We have talked with many *zhen* and *chan*, Thirishar.

SHAR

(difficult)

I hope you have found them suitable.

DIZHEI

(sigh)

We have not. In fact, they -

ANICHENT

They are not you, *ch'te*.

Moving closer, Anichent leans in and touches his antennae to Shar's. It is a profound relief for them both to be able to touch their bondmate again. They hold each other, whisper silent endearments. Shar grips tight, overwhelmed. Dizhei comes close from behind and joins the embrace.

DIZHEI

And they are not Thriss.

The long-delayed comfort, the love between them, almost brings Shar to tears. But eventually, he pulls himself away, and turns to face them.

SHAR

(whisper)

What is it you want from me?

ANICHENT

It is not too late, *ch'te*, for you to be our *chan*.

SHAR

Will there ever be a time when you don't blame me for her loss?

ANICHENT
(immediately)

Yes.

DIZHEI
(more hesitant)

Forgiveness is not the issue.
Whatever is past can stay in the
past. I cannot say that I will
ever understand the choices you
made, *ch'te*, but I can live with
them.

Suddenly, Shar notices a figure hovering in the archway. It
is *ch'Shal*, the security officer from earlier, politely
averting his eyes. Shar turns to him, letting him speak.

CH'SHAL
Forgive me, *cha* Thirishar, but you
must come with me. It is urgent.

SHAR
What is it?

CH'SHAL
Zha Charivretha is here.

On Shar's surprised, wary expression...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

34 INT. KEEP - THANTIS' WORKSHOP

Thantis stands with her back to the doorway, her hands clasped behind her. She is wearing a sleeveless *ceara*, a working outfit, and now we can see that her right arm is fake - a biosynthetic replacement attached at the shoulder.

By the doorway, far across the room, is Vretha - windswept and bedraggled, still wearing her heavy travelling cloak. They are personal and political rivals, competing *zhaveys* handling each other with icy precision across the room.

VRETHA

I apologise for my intrusion at this sacred time of Sending.

THANTIS

Somehow, it seems appropriate that your *chei*, who wreaked such havoc in my *zhei*'s life, should blunder into Thriss's final rites. He's always been headstrong, rarely willing to accept correction, ever insistent that his way was the right way. Then again, his present behaviour proves how effective your teachings have been.

Vretha resents being at Thantis's mercy, but understands the woman has lost her daughter. She lets the comment pass.

VRETHA

I apologise also for Thirishar's untimely visit. If not for the political protests against me - instigated by Visionist radicals, I believe - my *chei* need never have been on Andor at all.

THANTIS

(turns to Vretha)

Well said.

Vretha steps closer, near a table carrying a single flower in a vase. She gently cradles the flower in one hand.

VRETHA

I heard of your injuries during the invasion of Betazed. I hope your work has not suffered.

THANTIS

The biosynthetic arm was an adjustment, but I have resumed work on my art.

VRETHA

Andor is blessed by your recovery.

THANTIS

Your concerns are gracious, Charivretha. But let us put aside the niceties and deal with the matter at hand. You will take Shar and his... friend... back to Zhevra with you. He cannot stay here, nor can she. It is unseemly.

VRETHA

Shar has duties to attend to. He will do so. As for his friend, Ensign Tenmei will do as she pleases. Her plans are of no concern to me.

THANTIS

The plans of Prynn Tenmei should be of concern to you, Charivretha. You have already paid dearly for your naivety where your *chei* is concerned.

(beat)

Thirishar is on his way. Expect him shortly.

Thantis sweeps past Vretha and out of the room. Vretha opens her hand and THROWS the crushed flower away.

35 **EXT. CHEEN-THITAR KEEP - ESTABLISHING**

Just a few moments, emphasising the turbulent weather.

36 **INT. KEEP - THANTIS' WORKSHOP**

A few minutes later. Vretha now perches nervously on a couch in Thantis's room. Shar stands before her. He almost doesn't care what she thinks of him anymore.

VRETHA

You will come with me tonight.

SHAR

It isn't safe to travel. Between the protests and the typhoons -

VRETHA

The protests are nothing more than minor quibbles. As for the weather, my government transport is more capable than the kind of shuttle available in Thelasa-vei.

SHAR

And what if I choose to stay?

VRETHA

Oh, my naive *chei*. Sessethantis doesn't want either of us here. If my visit didn't make it easier for her to rid herself of you, I would never have made it inside these walls. Right now, she's plotting my political downfall with her Visionist cronies. No - you will come with me. I have too much to accomplish to squander my time humouring Thantis.

SHAR

You seem surprisingly well informed about my movements.

VRETHA

I am still Federation Councillor.
I am not without my resources.

SHAR
(tensing)
You had me followed.

VRETHA
In my place, what would you have
done? You haven't shown yourself
to be one who honours his
obligations.

SHAR
And have you honoured your promise
to separate me from my bondmates?

VRETHA
You haven't yet earned that right,
Thirishar. When my seat is secure,
you can walk away. Not before.

SHAR
Is that all I am to you? A tool, a
pawn?

VRETHA
You have made it abundantly clear
that you despise me -

SHAR
Hardly fair and not true -

VRETHA
(continuing)
- and I accept that. What you
refuse to accept is that you are
where you are today, a respected
Starfleet science officer with a
prestigious assignment, because of
me. I provided you with the
opportunities that gave you the
life you wanted, Shar.

SHAR
(sneer)

So I am nothing without you. Would
be nothing without you.

VRETHA
(angry hiss)
I gave you life!

SHAR
This wasn't the first time you had
me followed, was it?

Vretha finally stands, turning away from Shar, a little
shamed. It only incenses Shar more.

SHAR
Since I left for the Academy?

VRETHA
I only wanted to protect you,
Shar. You are so precious to me,
my *chei*, you must believe me.

Despite himself, Shar is fuming again. In an absolute rage
against his mother, he turns and stalks out of the room.
Vretha deflates.

37 INT. KEEP - CORRIDORS

Shar stalks through the corridors.

38 INT. KEEP - SLEEPING HALL

Prynn lies curled up on her mat, trying to get some sleep
and not having any success. She hears a rustling, senses a
presence, and looks up.

Shar is standing over her, gazing intensely into her eyes,
a mischievous, rebellious look on his face. He holds his
hand out to her.

SHAR
Come with me.

PRYNN
Where?

SHAR

Anywhere.

Grinning, Prynn takes his hand and lets him pull her upright. And they take off, eager for some misbehaviour.

Elsewhere in the sleeping room, Anichent sits on his own sleeping mat hidden behind one of the screens. He heard Prynn and Shar's exchange. Tensing, he gets slowly and quietly up from his mat and creeps after the pair, careful not to get caught.

39 INT. KEEP - CORRIDORS

Vretha stalks through the long, stony corridors. She is equally as frustrated as Shar, angry with Thantis, just generally in a bad mood.

She reaches the same crossroads that Prynn did earlier. Just as she turns the corner, a hand darts out of the shadows and SLAPS a cloth over Vretha's mouth and nose.

The unidentified assailant GRABS Vretha around the waist, pinning her arms with his other hand.

She STRUGGLES against the assailant's body, but he is too strong, and she is losing consciousness. Her eyes flicker and roll back in her head, and she slumps, out cold.

40 INT. ANDORIAN PERSONAL AIRCAR

Prynn and Shar are back inside their small personal vessel. Through the windows we can see that the vehicle sits within an underground hangar where many such vessels are stored.

They are eagerly strapping themselves in, furtively hoping not to get caught.

SHAR

Are you certain you can do this?

PRYNN

I've flown under worse conditions.
Remember that flight over the
Prentara homeworld in the *Chaffee*?

SHAR
(flat)
Yes. We crashed.

PRYNN
(grinning)
Shut up, Shar.
(pause)
Are you sure you want to do this?

SHAR
Yes. The longer I remain here, the
more I feel buried alive.

Prynn puts the vehicle into drive. It rises on anti-gravs,
hovering off the ground. But one last pause before they go.

PRYNN
So how does it feel, being an
outlaw?

SHAR
Honestly? Liberating.

PRYNN
Then let's go.

She slams the car into action again, and it ROARS out of
the hangar, down a long tunnel that leads to the outside,
and into the darkness.

FADE OUT:

THE END